(c) what is the action plan of Government to give a boost to this sector to generate additional employment opportunities and improve the economy of the respective regions?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI KAMAL NATH): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. As per the Index of Industrial Production (IIP) with base 1993-94, released by the Central Statistical Organisation, the manufacturing sector has shown a steady increase in growth from 6.0 per cent in 2002-03 to 7.4 per cent in 2003-04 and to 9.1 per cent in 2004-05.

(c) The Union Government supplements the efforts of State Governments to promote industries in their respective States, through a variety of policy measures and programmes. The Government has initiated several steps to hasten the pace of industrial growth, including rationlization in duty rates of customs and central excise. Measures to promote manufacturing and the requisite physical infrastructure such as the Industrial Infrastructure Up-gradation Scheme (IIUS) to enhance productivity and competitiveness of the domestic industry by providing quality infrastructure in functional clusters and the Industrial Park Scheme have been launched. Special incentives are being given to promote industrialization in the North-East Region and in the special category States. Recognizing the distinct comparative advantages enjoyed by the leather sector and its employment potentiality, a scheme for the integrated leather development with an outlay Rs. 290 crore has been approved by the Government in the Tenth Plan. An ongoing scheme exists for the improvement of infrastructure and skill development in the leather sector.

Border trade through North Eastern Region

1765. SHRIMATI MOHSINA KIDWAI: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the fact that poor infrastructure has hit North East trade;

(b) if so, what action Government have taken to improve the infrastructure and to improve border trade through North Eastern region; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI E.V.K.S. ELANGOVAN): (a) to (c) Government is taking steps to improve the export infrastructure to increase trade from the North Eastern region. Under the Assistance to States for Development of Export Infrastructure and Allied Activities (ASIDE) Scheme, the Central Government provides 10% of the total outlay for developing export infrastructure in the North Eastern region. Border trade with Myanmar is taking place through Moreh in Manipur. Zokhwathar in Mizoram has been inaugurated as a border trade point and Rs. 4.22 crore have been released to the Border Roads Organization under ASIDE Scheme for construction of a composite building at Zokhawthar. A border trade mart is also being set up at Sherathang in Sikkim for commencing Border Trade between India and China through Nathu La.

Import of gold and silver

1766. DR. ALLADI P. RAJKUMAR: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Minister proposes to allow import of gold and silver directly by individual and small jewellers; and

(b) if so, the details thereof and by when it will be permitted?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI E.V.K.S. ELANGOVAN): (a) and (b) A proposal is under consideration of the Ministry of Finance for enlarging the scope of the entities allowed to import gold so as to include companies with a net worth of Rs. 25 Crores in the jewellery business, apart from the presently nominated agencies & Five Star Export Houses.

Negotiations for opening up of global farm goods market

1767. SHRI MURLI DEORA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether negotiations to open up the global farm goods market further, are not progressing satisfactorily and if so, the reasons therefor;

(b) whether developed countries are primarily responsible for large distortions and protectiveness in the agricultural sector and if so, the details thereof; and